

Cheltenham
Ps Rob Buckingham
19 & 20 November 2016

VISION 2017

JUST BE THANKFUL

Message Notes

"Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"
1 Thessalonians 5:18 (HCSB)

1. This is God's will for you

The number one question Christians ask about their faith is, *"How can I know God's will for my life?"*

The question treats God as if he has 7 billion wills – one for every person – and somehow they all need to harmonize, and it's a really crazy picture if you think about it. The question should be, "what is God's will for the world and how do I serve that with my life?" This makes it God-centred, and now there are 7 billion people who can all harmonize as a body because we're all coming and steering into one unified purpose. Then the question becomes, "how do I receive guidance as I go through trying to navigate serving God's will?" And that's a lot easier to answer because it's a day-to-day gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit..." (Ps Ken Wytsma)

And so a better questions than, "How can I know God's will for my life?" Would be, "What is God's will for the world and how do I serve that with my life?"

Of course the Word of God is also the Will of God and our theme verse for 2017 tells us something of God's will: it is to "*give thanks IN everything...*" (Not FOR everything)

When we are being thankful we are expressing God's will...

2. Give thanks in everything

"Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" ~
1 Thessalonians 5:18 (HCSB)

What the Bible has taught for over 2,000 has now been confirmed by science ~ negative attitudes are bad for you and thankfulness makes you happier and healthier (see Proverbs 17:22; Philippians 4:4-8; Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

This doesn't mean that you need to live in a state of constant denial about the mean, frustrating and unjust things that happen in the world and to you. Thankfulness works when you are thankful for something real.

Recent studies have concluded that the expression of thankfulness can have profound and positive effects on our health, our moods and our relationships. As doctors Blaire and Rita Justice reported for the University of Texas Health Science Centre, "*a growing body of research shows that thankfulness is truly amazing in its physical and psychosocial benefits.*"

Out of recent studies where group one was encouraged to focus daily on things they were grateful for, and group two focused on things that displeased them, the "thankful" group:

- Felt better about their lives
- Were 25% happier
- Reported fewer health complaints
- Exercised, on average, one and a half hours more
- Were more likely to offer emotional support or help others who were facing a personal problem (I.e. thankfulness increased their goodwill towards others)
- Reported more hours of sleep each night and were more refreshed when they awoke.
- Experienced more satisfaction with their lives as a whole, were more optimistic about the future, and were more connected with others.
- Were less likely to feel depressed (several studies have shown depression to be inversely correlated to thankfulness)

Dr John Gottman at the University of Washington has been researching marriages for two decades. The conclusion of all that research is that unless a couple is able to maintain a high ratio of positive to negative encounters (5:1 or greater), it is likely the marriage will end. The formula is that for every negative expression (a complaint, put-down, expression of anger) there needs to be about five positive ones (smiles, compliments, laughter, expressions of appreciation and thankfulness).

"If you've forgotten the language of gratitude, you'll never be on speaking terms with happiness!"

Give thanks in everything is something we need to practice...

- Write things at the end of each day that you were thankful for
- Tell others what you appreciate about them
- Tell yourself things that you like about yourself

Being thankful is God's will because:

1. It makes you good to be around

2. It reminds you of how good God is

3. It takes your eyes off your circumstances

Romans 5:3-5, "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (2 Cor. 7:4)

4. It lifts your spirits
